

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 /076 W
-----043032 071330Z /46

P R 062110Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8165
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 5300

EO 11652 XGDS-3
TAGS PEPR PO BR
SUBJECT: SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERING BRIZOLA AS OPPOSITION
LEADER IN BRAZIL

REF: A. STATE 166189 B. LISBON 4737 C. BRASILIA 4703(NOTAL)
D. 77 BRASILIA 7624

1. SUMMARY: WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE USG SHOULD ENCOURAGE MATEUS AND HIS SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL COLLEAGUES TO SUPPORT BRIZOLA AS LEADER OF THE "DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION TO THE MILITARY REGIME" IN BRAZIL, OR IN ANY WAY APPEAR TO ENDORSE THIS INITIATIVE. WE HAVE ALREADY ADDRESSED THE ISSUE OF WHETHER OR NOT THE USG SHOULD TAKE ADDITIONAL MEASURES IN THE UNFOLDING BRAZILIAN SITUATION (REFTEL C). IN THAT MESSAGE, WE CONCLUDED THAT THE POLITICAL SITUATION WAS VERY FLUID BUT GENERALLY MOVING IN A DIRECTION CONSISTENT WITH OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDED AGAINST ANY NEW INITIATIVES ON OUR PART. END SUMMARY.

2. SINCE REFTTEL C WAS WRITTEN, PRESIDENT GEISEL HAS FORMALLY UNVEILED HIS CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PACKAGE, WHICH IS NOW BEING CONSIDERED BY THE OPPOSITION, BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL. THE MDB HAS IN TURN SUBMITTED A PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO THE CONGRESS THAT
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WOULD, IF APPROVED, REINSTATE DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR STATE GOVERNORS AND FOR ALL SENATORIAL CANDIDATES IN THE NOVEMBER 15 ELECTIONS (REPORTED SEPARATELY). THE MDB PROPOSAL WOULD OVERTURN AN AMENDMENT DECREED IN APRIL 1977 BY THE GOB MAKING THOSE ELECTIONS INDIRECT.

3. THE GEISEL PACKAGE, NOW UNDER INTENSE DISCUSSION, REPRESENTS A COMPROMISE--EVEN THOUGH IT MAY NOT BE THE BEST POSSIBLE ONE--BY

GEISEL WITH BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN HARDLINERS IN HIS REGIME WORKED OUT OVER A PERIOD OF MONTHS. WHILE GEISEL MAY HAVE ROOM FOR FURTHER MANEUVER WITHIN THE SYSTEM, IT WOULD IN ANY EVENT BE LIMITED, AND IT WOULD BE REDUCED PROGRESSIVELY TO THE EXTENT THAT: A) HE IS PERCEIVED TO BE GIVING IN TO OPPOSITION PRESSURES, OR B. THAT THE OPPOSITION IS PERCEIVED TO BE SEEKING, IN EFFECT, TO OVERTURN THE REVOLUTION. SOME OF THE MOREHARDLINE MEMBERS OF THE SYSTEM, BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, ALREADY APPEAR TO VIEW THE PROPOSED MDB CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IN THAT LIGHT.

4. WHAT IS NOW OCCURRING IN BRAZIL IS A POLITICAL BALANCING ACT WHICH WILL BECOME ALL THE MORE DELICATE AS THE NEXT FEW MONTHS UNFOLD. MOST POLITICALLY AWARE BRAZILIANS, VERY MUCH INCLUDING THE LARGE MODERATE CIVILIAN SEGMENTS OF THE OPPOSITION, ARE QUITE CONSCIOUS OF THE FACT THAT OTHER DELICATE PERIODS SINCE 1964 HAVE RESULTED IN THE APPLICATION OF NAKED MILITARY PRESSURE ON THE THEN PRESIDENT (CASTELLO BRANCO IN 1966 AND COSTA E SILVA IN 1968) WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT SERIOUS RETROGRESSIONS IN BRAZIL'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. EVERYONE IS ACUTELY AWARE THAT MILITARY PRESSURES ON COSTA E SILVA IN 1968 RESULTED IN INSTITUTIONAL ACT NO. 5, WHICH GEISEL AND THE REGIME HAVE NOW AGREED TO ABROGATE IN RETURN FOR "ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS" FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE STATE. JUST WHAT THE ULTIMATE FORM OF THESE SAFEGUARDS MIGHT BE WILL BE DETERMINED BY HARD AND CAREFUL BARGAINING OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

5. IT WOULD NOT BE IN OUR INTEREST TO BECOME INVOLVED IN A MOVE
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THAT COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE DEMOCRATIC OPENNING NOW TAKING PLACE. AS WE INDICATED WHEN BRIZOLA WAS BEING EXPELLED FROM URUGUAY (REFTEL D), HE HAS BEEN ANATHEMA TO THE MILITARY SINCE THE 1964 REVOLUTION. THE GOB'S PUBLIC POSITION ON HIS POSSIBLE RETURN TO BRAZIL, RESTATED AS RECENTLY AS JULY 5 BY GEISEL'S PRESS SPOKESMAN, IS THAT NO LEGAL IMPDIMENT TO HIS RETURN EXISTS BUT THAT THERE ARE NUMEROUS OUTSTANDING CHARGES PENDING AGAINST HIM WHICH HE WOULD HAVE TO FACE. HIS RETURN COULD THUS BE DESTABILIZING IN THE EVOLVING POLITICAL SITUATION. WE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT WANT TO BE IDENTIFIED AS PROMOTER OF SUCH A DEVELOPMENT.

6. WITH POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS MOVING IN DIRECTION GENERALLY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 5300

FAVORABLE TO US OBJECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT I DO NOT BELIEVE IT WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR US OFFICIALS EITHER IN BRAZIL OR WASHINGTON TO BE ENDORSING SPECIFIC CANDIDATES, EITHER IMPLICITLY OR EXPLICITLY, TO LEAD POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN BRAZIL. SINCE MY ARRIVAL, I HAVE TALKED TO A NUMBER OF BRAZILIANS WHO HAVE BEEN IN FOREFRONT OF EFFORTS TO REMOVE RESTRICTIONS ON PRESS, CONGRESS, JUDICIARY AND DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS GENERALLY. THEY WELCOME OUR MORAL SUPPORT AND THE LEADERSHIP THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAS PROVIDED GENERALLY ON SUCH ISSUES BUT THEY FEEL IT IS THEIR JOB TO DO IT IN BRAZIL AND THAT ANYTHING MORE SPECIFIC ON USG PART WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. WHILE I BELIEVE THAT WE MUST INSIST ON OUR RIGHT TO TALK TO BRAZILIANS OF ALL PERSUASIONS, I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT USG OFFICIALS SHOULD BE MEETING WITH ANY SPECIFIC BRAZILIAN AT THIS TIME FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONVEYING A POLITICAL MESSAGE. ACCORDINGLY, I WOULD NOT FAVOR ARRANGING A MEETING WITH BRIZOLA IN NEW YORK OR WASHINGTON.

7. THE FOREGOING IS WITHOUT REGARD TO THE FACT THAT THE GOB WOULD BEAR THE LION'S SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHATEVER HAPPENS WITH OR BECAUSE OF BRIZOLA, AS IT MOST PROBABLY INITIATED THE MOVE TO EXPEL HIM FROM URUGUAY LAST SEPTEMBER AND THUS BROUGHT HIM OUT OF OBSCURITY HE HAD BEEN IN SINCE THE MID-1960'S.

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8. THE ABOVE SAID, IT APPEARS TO US THAT MATEUS (AND PERHAPS THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL) GROSSLY OVERESTIMATE THE DEGREE TO WHICH BRIZOLA HAS A FOLLOWING HERE. IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS HIS NAME HAS APPEARED IN THE PRESS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IN CONNECTION WITH HIS TRAVEL OR TRAVEL PLANS, INCLUDING THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS EVENTUAL RETURN TO BRAZIL. (ON JUNE 28, FOR EXAMPLE, LOCAL PRESS QUOTED HIM FROM LISBON AS MAKING SOME UNCOMPLIMENTARY REMARKS ABOUT GEISEL'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PROPOSALS AND SAYING HE PLANNED TO RETURN TO BRAZIL SOON.) MATEUS' STATEMENT IN PARA 2

OF REFTEL B THAT "THERE APPEARS TO BE A BUILDING CONSENSUS BEHIND BRIZOLA" IS NOT SUPPORTED BY ANY EVIDENCE OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE. HIS NAME HAS NOT BEEN MENTIONED TO ME OR TO OTHERS ON MY STAFF BY ANY OPPOSITION ELEMENTS. THE "SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER" OF BRAZILIAN DEPUTIES WHO MAY HAVE PRIVATELY, "PLEDGED" THEMSELVES TO BRIZOLA IS, IF IT EXISTS, MOST PROBABLY LIMITED LARGELY TO A DOZEN OR TWO (OF A TOTAL OF 365) OF THOSE WHO COMPOSE THE EMOTIONAL LEFT "AUTENTICO" AND "NEO-AUTENTICO" WINGS OF THE MDB.

9. THIS IS NOT TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT AN EFFORT--REAL OR APPARENT-- BY SOME SEGMENT OF THE OPPOSITION TO RALLY AROUND BRIZOLA, OR TO BRING HIM "TRIUMPHANTLY" HOME, WOULD BE EASILY ASSIMILATED BY THE REGIME. NEITHER WOULD IT BE EASILY ASSIMILATED BY THE MODERATE LEADERSHIP OF THE MDB WHICH, NOTWITHSTANDING SOME OF ITS RHETORIC, IS VERY CAREFULLY TRYING TO AVOID POLITICAL ACCIDENTS THAT MIGHT INCREASE HARDLINE PRESSURES ON GEISEL TO HOLD FAST OR TO CLOSE DOWN RATHER THAN TO CONSIDER A FURTHER OPENING OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, OPPOSITION PARTIES, PARTY LEADERS, ELECTION CANDIDATES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BRASIL05300
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780279-0210
Format: TEL
From: BRASILIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780792/aaaaczqc.tel
Line Count: 189
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c5f0fb7a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 166189, 77 BRASILIA 7624
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2109067
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERING BRIZOLA AS OPPOSITION LEADER IN BRAZIL
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, PO, BR, US, (BRIZOLA, MOURE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c5f0fb7a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014